

Marketing Regional Farms and Wineries

A Guide for California Agricultural Marketing Groups



Introduction

All over California, groups of farmers, vintners and their supporters are promoting their regions to the public to maintain and add value to regional agricultural operations. Some groups have been promoting regional agriculture for many years; others have just started. Goals vary from attracting visitors from several hours away to taste wine to encouraging local residents to eat more local fruits and vegetables; from increasing direct marketing revenue at local farm stands and pumpkin patches to maintaining the rural quality of their area. Some focus on creating a brand that raises the value of products from the region or on advocating for issues of importance to farmers. These groups conduct a variety of activities and use a variety of marketing methods to meet these goals. Some of the groups are very successful; others less so.

From 2013 through 2015, the University of California Small Farm Program coordinated a project called “Building a Farm Trail: Developing effective agritourism associations to enhance rural tourism and promote specialty crops.” The project, funded by the California Department of Food and Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant, provided technical assistance in map brochure creation, website development, collaborative event planning and organizational sustainability to three recently formed California regional agricultural marketing associations. As part of this project, UC Small Farm Program staff interviewed leaders of twenty California regional agricultural marketing organizations and compiled information from earlier interviews and presentations from four other groups. This guide is a summary of the experiences and advice from leaders of those 24 groups. Other California regional agricultural marketing groups will have had different experiences, and many members of the groups discussed here may also have had different experiences. The focus of this guide is to share the experiences and advice of a representative group of leaders with other groups of California agricultural producers with similar goals and intentions.

Penny Leff
Agritourism Coordinator
UC Small Farm Program

This project is funded by the
California Department of
Food and Agriculture
Specialty Crop Block Grant Program



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A very brief history of needs and opportunities *(See appendix 1 for a more complete version of the groups' start-up stories)*

§ **Apples, cider and apple pies**

Oak Glen Apple Growers Association started in 1914 as a wholesale apple growers' association united to move bulk apples to market by rail. By the 1950s, these growers were edged out of the wholesale market by competition from Washington State, so they began targeting Los Angeles tourists for retail sales and agritourism. In the early 1960s, pear growers in the Sierra foothills were hit by a pear blight that destroyed their crops. They visited Oak Glen to learn about retail apple marketing, and formed the **Apple Hill Growers Association** to market themselves together to visitors from the Sacramento region.



§ **Farm stands**

In the 1970s many small-scale growers in agricultural regions close to population centers were direct-marketing their crops through roadside stands on the farms. Sonoma County farmers formed **Sonoma County Farm Trails** to pull in visitors to the region. Farmers in the Brentwood region of Contra Costa County pooled their advertising budgets to create **Harvest Time in Brentwood** and the Santa Clara County Farm Bureau and local growers created the first **Country Crossroads Map**, promoting local farm stands.

§ **Farmers' markets and county support**

By the 1990s, farmers' markets were becoming popular as direct marketing venues for farmers as well as for their cultural and economic benefits for communities. Boards of Supervisors in several foothill counties supported growers in developing farmers' markets and regional marketing organizations, helping start **El Dorado County Farm Trails**, **Farms of Amador County**, and **PlacerGROWN**.



§ **Local food for local people and regional agritourism**

In the early 2000s, two different themes emerged in regional agricultural marketing associations. Rural community members (not necessarily farmers) and local governments saw the need to protect and support agriculture. At the same time, an increasing number of growers were producing wine, olive oil, cheese and other value-added products in boutique facilities and recognizing the potential for a regional brand and agritourism activities to increase their revenue. The City of Fairfield supported winegrape growers in forming the **Suisun Valley Vintners and Growers Association**. UC Cooperative Extension supported community members and growers in starting **Farms of Tuolumne County** and **Country Ventures** (Merced County). The Community Alliance for Family Farmers (CAFF) helped farmers create **Capay Valley Grown** in Yolo County and vintners and farmers in Butte County established the **Sierra Oro Farm Trail**. The **Mariposa AgriNature Association**, **Nevada County Grown** and the **Lake County Winery Association** all started in this period with financial support from their county boards of supervisors.

§ **USDA funding, new wine and farm trails**

In the late 2000s and early 2010s, two major USDA programs funded through the Farm Bill—the Farmers' Market Promotion Program (FMPP) and the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBG)—contributed to the start-up of local agricultural marketing programs in several counties, funding governmental, educational or non-profit entities working "on behalf of" agricultural producers. Meanwhile, producer-based, self-funded groups continued to organize themselves to develop farm and wine trails. **Solano Grown**, **Stanislaus Grown**, **Colusa County Grown** and the **Riverside County Ag Trail** were all started by non-profit or government organizations. The **North Sierra Wine Trail**, **North Yuba Grown** and the **Sacramento River Delta Grown Agritourism Association** were formed by local growers and vintners.



Group goals – Reasons for organizing

Each of the regional marketing organizations started with stated goals. The goals varied, with some groups specifying several goals. Here is a summary:

- Promote agritourism in the region to people outside the region, as well as to local people, generating increased revenue to participating farms, ranches and wineries.
- Encourage local consumption of local food, establish connections between local growers and consumers.
- Support local farmers, encourage more farming and educate the public about agriculture.
- Build political support for local agriculture and agritourism, protect agricultural land for agriculture and advocate on issues important to farmers.
- Develop, support or promote direct marketing venues and other marketing channels that benefit regional producers.
- Encourage mutual support among local producers.
- Develop a brand that adds value to local agricultural products and market the products of the region under the brand to increase revenue to local producers.

Some challenges relating to goals

1. Conflicting goals within an organization

North Yuba Grown was started by a diverse group who had divergent goals for the organization. Community members in the very beginning had a strong sense that they wanted to connect the local population, particularly lower income community members, with local food. Then the focus shifted to being a marketing venue for local terroir, encouraging high-income people from out of the area to travel to the region for wine and olive oil tasting and sales. A third goal was to bring improved economic opportunities to local farms. These were three not completely synergistic goals, as North Yuba Grown's volunteer Executive Director explains, "Wine and olive oil don't mix well with squash and tomatoes in terms of the people involved. There is no natural friendship or affinity there."

"Wine and olive oil don't mix well with squash and tomatoes in terms of the people involved. There is no natural friendship or affinity there."

***- Gary Hawthorne,
North Yuba Grown***



2. Goals may need to change over time as conditions change

- **Sonoma County Farm Trails** started primarily to promote farm stands, U-Pick operations and on-farm direct marketing. As many members began selling through farmers' markets and CSAs, the farm stands became less important marketing channels. The group evolved by staying in touch with members' needs, organizing more events that benefited members who were not open all the time, and by marketing the members in different ways.

- **Solano Grown** needed to shift its focus and goals when the funding from the FMPP program ended and the organization received a new grant for different work from the SCBG program. Under the FMPP grant funding, the group focused on direct marketing training, workshops and conference scholarships for producers. Under the SCBG grant, the focus was on marketing Solano Grown to the Bay Area. The current grant, again from the SCBG, focuses on the operation and marketing of an online marketplace to sell local products to local consumers.
- **Marin Organic** does not currently see a need for collaborative marketing activities for this group of experienced farmer/members. Most producer members were founders of California organic farming and of Marin Organic and do their own great marketing, without need for collaborative marketing, and are able to sell their entire crops for good prices at farmers' markets, CSAs, to chefs, etc. The focus of the organization is now on transferring knowledge to youth and to the next generation of farmers.

Advice from organization leaders about their initial goals

Most association leaders offered some variation on the theme of keeping your goals clear, focused and simple. They advise that it works best if you have a common goal, and do not go in too many directions. Another theme stressed by many was the need for goals to be attainable and narrow enough that you can get them done. In general, keep your focus, and don't take on too much.



Organizational structure and leadership

Most of the groups surveyed for this guide are organized as 501(c)3 non-profit educational organizations, with a few organized as 501(c)6 non-profit trade associations. Most are membership organizations run by volunteer boards of directors. Some groups operated for several years before obtaining official non-profit status, sometimes operating under the umbrella of larger governmental or non-profit organizations.

The following groups are currently operated by government or larger non-profit organizations:

- **The Riverside County Ag Trail** is a one-time website, with no current plans for updating or maintenance. It was created by a coalition of Riverside County departments with the support of the Riverside County Board of Supervisors.
- **PlacerGROWN** is a 501(c)3 organization with a board of directors, but is no longer a membership organization. The Placer County Department of Agriculture manages the agricultural marketing program, including the website and social media, using the PlacerGROWN brand to promote all Placer County growers.
- **Mariposa AgriNature Association** is a 501(c)3 organization with a board of directors, but currently does not have a membership.
- **Country Ventures** operates as a project of the non-profit Valley Land Alliance.
- The **Country Crossroads Map** is a separate stand-alone 501(c)3 organization with membership and a board of directors, but is staffed and managed by two county Farm Bureaus.
- **Colusa Grown** has no members and no board of directors, but is operated as a project of the Colusa County Resource Conservation District.
- **Stanislaus Grown** is a project of the East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District. It has no board of directors, but all producers listed in the Local Food Guide are considered members and invited to an annual membership meeting.
- **Capay Valley Grown** is operated as a project of the non-profit organization Capay Valley Vision and does not have an independent board of directors, but has a membership of local producers who pay an annual fee to use the logo and be included in marketing activities.

Challenges related to organizational leadership

1. Who controls the board?

Several organization leaders mentioned challenges that their groups have faced, and practices that they have implemented, to make sure that the board remains responsive to the agricultural producers that the organization was established to support.

- **The Suisun Valley Vintners and Growers Association** is run by a volunteer board of directors, with no paid staff. The board and committees do much of the work, with major contracted relationships for marketing and event organizing. Grower members are the only voting members, while affiliate members (wineries and marketers) can serve on committees, but do not vote. The marketing committee includes many affiliate members and plans major promotional activities. To maintain the board's control of the marketing committee, the Vice

President of the association is always the standing chair, and two members of the five-member marketing committee are board members or growers.

- **Nevada County Grown** bylaws state how many board members will be producers and how many at-large community members – up to five producer members and up to three community members.



2. Recruiting and retaining good board members and future leaders

- **Harvest Time in Brentwood:** For years, it was difficult to recruit board members. However, with the new marketing tools such as social media, a new website, and an app, there is more interest from growers in getting involved. The newer generation of farmers, especially, wants to be part of the process.
- **Suisun Valley Vintners and Growers Association** advice: Selection of leadership is primary. Succession of leadership is next. The board needs to identify future leadership, nurture and bring them in.
- **Farms of Tuolumne County:** For transition planning, the Executive Director is working on a binder to hand over organizing the Farm Tour to the next person (but has no takers yet).

Sonoma County Farm Trails’ board transition story:

In 2011, the organization’s farmer members felt that the board had gotten away from Farm Trails’ roots and voted out the entire board of directors. The board at the time had evolved in a way that was not generally seen as beneficial to members and was not composed of enough farmers as stipulated in the bylaws.

When the old board was voted out, the staff quit and farmer/members became much more involved in running the organization. The new Executive Director (E.D.) they hired to run the organization tried to make some major changes to the Apple Fair that were very poorly received and which negatively impacted the finances of Farm Trails. Rather than serving as the primary annual fundraiser, the Fair lost money that year, and the organization nearly folded.

Again, there was board and staff transition, and the part-time Office Manager took on the E.D. position in the fall of 2012 with the goal of producing a successful Apple Fair and reviving Farm Trails with community support. From that point until spring 2015, the board met every two weeks with the E.D. to help stabilize the organization and hone its mission. One farmer member co-signed a loan to provide funds for the organization to carry on and plan for the next Fair. The organization did not charge any dues to members for 1 1/2 years, and was not able to print the Map and Guide or put on the annual farm tour events.

By 2014, the organization was solidly on its feet, able to print the Map and Guide again, bring back the seasonal farm tours, produce the Barn Dance and Fall Feast (farm-to-table events), fund and expand historical scholarships and to contribute even more deliverables to members.

Farm Trails currently operates with monthly board meetings, one full-time staff (E.D.), a part-time office manager, part-time publicist, part-time graphic designer, multiple event-oriented contract workers, and over 100 volunteers.

3. Does the board manage the Executive Director effectively?

Several leaders mentioned the need for policies that ensure that the organization's Executive Director (E.D.) or CEO can be effectively directed by the board.

- One previous E.D. of the **El Dorado County Farm Trails** was also the Market Manager for the three farmers' markets run by the organization. This person did not act in the organization's best interests and was able to transfer management of two of the association's farmers' markets to himself when he left.
- **The Lake County Winery Association** E.D. recommends to her board and others: "Have discussions about your financial policies. Make sure you have a position description for the E.D. You need to be able to manage the next person in that position if they are less experienced and need more oversight than the current E.D."

More advice about organizational leadership

- In forming a board, the personality of the board members and their passions can help you flourish or can kill the organization.
- Board members' willingness to contribute time beyond meetings is extremely important.
- Don't underestimate the amount of time it takes to build the group's infrastructure, including defining membership, agreeing on bylaws and establishing non-profit status.
- Have a collaborative team with all the needed skills for your project.
- Don't negate the veterans for the new guys. Keep the balance between the innovators and old-timers. Old-timers know the rhythms of community and have valuable experience.
- Recognize that it is hard to run a board that depends on volunteer farmers. This challenge has been met by rotating the board membership among farmer members as they get tired of it.
- Never let one person be in a position where they can control the organization, but the organization cannot control him or her.



Membership

The groups interviewed for this project varied widely in the importance of membership to the work of the organization, as well as in the number of members, fees paid, benefits received and the efforts made by the organization's leadership to measure and maximize benefits to members. In general, those groups that are predominantly member-funded and define themselves primarily as marketing associations seem to place more importance on increasing the value of benefits to members. Those groups that are grant funded, have lower membership fees, and/or more diffuse goals seem to place more value on increasing the benefits to the community at large.

***Some examples of membership fees, membership numbers and member benefits
(See appendix for summary chart of information about all groups involved in this study)***

Sonoma County Farm Trails

Currently SCFT is a membership organization with about 120 producer members and about 50 associate members. All members pay \$150 in annual dues (some are in-kind). The E.D. says, "Helping farmers stay economically viable is a huge priority of ours, and we work to promote local agriculture through all the channels we can and to direct the public to the producers for direct sales. With the advent of farmers' markets, CSAs, and broader distribution to restaurants and groceries, farm stands are not an essential income variable. However, the public is increasingly interested in on-site visits. We have adapted to the changing landscape by producing seasonal farm tours, diversifying our operations, producing farm-to-table feasts where we source from and showcase our members, involving members as vendors at events, and maintaining a dynamic website with robust search functionality to feature our member products and services. It is really important to talk with the farmers and see what they need and want and not assume that you know. We have solid deliverables, and we are committed to providing value for members!"

Suisun Valley Vintners & Growers Association

Currently SVVGA has 110 members including 41 grower members. Associate members include the marketing community, restaurants, etc. Dues are now structured at \$10/acre/year for grower members, with a minimum of \$200 and a maximum of \$1000 per member. Associate members pay \$200/year. The group has a sizeable annual budget, of which 15% is used for IT for two websites, one directed at the public and the other at the industry. Success is measured by the number of members who stay active in the organization, and by reports from members on whether traffic to farm stands and wineries, the number of visitors in the tasting rooms, and the number of cases of wine sold is going up or down. Support from members for the dues structure – is it working? – is a very important measure of success.

Advice:

Assessing the needs of members – How do the groups learn what members need?

The consensus of most responses to the question of how to best assess the needs of group members was that in-person discussions were more effective than surveys or written requests. Many tried to solicit input through newsletters, questionnaires or surveys, but most did not get good response through these means. Most organization leaders said that conversation at regular membership meetings and personal conversations with members outside of meetings were the best way to learn what was needed or what problems were coming up for the group.

Oak Glen Apple Growers Association

Currently OGAGA includes 10 apple grower members out of 32 total members. The organization is financed by a \$335 annual membership fee, which buys website presence, brochures, and inclusion on the press releases. Some members pay more for additional pages on the website, banner listings, ads, etc. According to a long-time association leader, the group has been very effective in achieving its marketing goals, but has been less effective in getting community participation in the association. A few growers have dropped out after not seeing results. Success is measured by a recap by members of traffic flow after events and by an estimated count of cars entering the association's "loop."

North Yuba Grown

Currently NYG has 19 members, of whom 13 are producers of some kind (some hobby farmers, some food processors but not farmers). All pay a \$40 annual membership fee, which buys the right to vote for the board of directors. The E.D. says that four or five local wineries and olive oil producers have benefited from the increased publicity generated by the group's farm trail map and website, but he isn't sure about whether the group benefits other members. However, the North Yuba Grown brand has value in that the County Board of Supervisors and Planning Department now know the group and take their opinions into account when revising county ordinances impacting farmers and agritourism operators.

Harvest Time In Brentwood

Currently Harvest Time has 47 producer members, each paying \$300 annually. Affiliate members/sponsors pay fees varying from \$300 to \$10,000, depending on their level of involvement at the annual harvest festival. A long-time association leader says, "Definitely the program is working for growers. More growers are now joining and saying 'why didn't I do this years ago?' Growers are seeing the benefit of the new tools – a modern website, app, and social media program."



Solano Grown

Currently there are 30 paid members of Solano Grown, paying \$30 annual dues. Sponsors pay \$60. Community supporters can sign up for free to get information. Eleven producers are currently listed in the online marketplace site. No assessment of members' needs has been done in the past few years, although earlier assessments of local growers determined a need for assistance with expanding direct marketing opportunities. Leaders measure the success of their program by the number of members, the number of workshops offered and the number of participants, and the volume of sales through the online marketplace. A major accomplishment is the creation of a brand and logo available for use by all Solano County growers.

Farms of Tuolumne County

Currently FOTC has 50 producer members, including five wineries and 20 associate member businesses, each paying \$50/year. Sponsorships are \$200/year, with six current sponsors. Additional supporters offer in-kind support. The leader was not sure how effective the marketing is, saying, "People do find

farmers and ranchers through the website, but farmers and ranchers don't often tell the association about these referrals." However, organizational success includes increased community involvement and recognition over the years and people come to Farms of Tuolumne County with questions about Tuolumne County agriculture. The group also counts as an achievement the creation of the successful Farm Tour as a fundraiser and a way to give back to the community and benefit participating businesses.

Lake County Winery Association

Currently LCWA has 54 members in four categories:

- Full winery (with production and tasting room): \$300 - \$2500 annual fee, based on production.
- Winemaker (no on-site production or tasting room): \$400 annual fee.
- Vineyard member: \$100 annual fee.
- Associate member (hospitality, financial industry, contributors): \$200 - \$500 annually.

The organization measures success by number of tickets sold to the Wine Trail event and by the success of the members, as measured by new wine club memberships, wine sold on the event days, and wine sold on other days. Membership continues to grow and members are seeing value in the organization, as evidenced by increasing participation at board meetings. "It is a general challenge to provide value to all members, particularly to the hospitality industry members who are needed by the organization," said the group's Executive Director.



Recruiting and encouraging involvement by members – challenges and advice

Apple Hill Growers Association takes these steps to improve membership involvement:

- Publishes a membership newsletter and sends postcards to members about meetings.
- Set up a "members only" log-in area on their website to improve grower communication.
- Gets suppliers to sponsor the membership newsletter.
- Reminds members to "keep the brand strong!"

Most groups struggle with recruiting members and getting them to participate. Here is a summary of advice from group leaders about membership and participation:

- Provide and demonstrate value to members. Several of the leaders of organizations with large memberships and/or membership fees of \$150 or more stressed the importance of making sure that membership in the group provided good value to all members, and that the group could easily communicate this value to members and potential members.
- Stay in touch with members and those you want to stay involved in the organization. Talk with them in person, as well as by email. Visit, encourage and listen.
- Have members tell others they know about the benefits of joining.

- Be open to feedback, even when it isn't what you want to hear. Validate the comments. When members bring up concerns, make sure they know you care.
- Involve members in the activities of the organization; be positive and appreciative
 - Try to do things that focus on members' sharing information and techniques and encourage collaboration.
 - Try to tap into the individual skills and resources of your members. Realize that it takes a tremendous coalition and a collaborative team to make an effective organization.
 - Keep a positive attitude and have fun at your committee meetings.



From Sierra Oro Farm Trails:

- It's not about your farm trail making money. It's about the farms making money.
- Make it about why they can't afford not to be part of your project.
- Offer scholarships to farms with unique selling propositions who can't afford to join or are on the fence.

The leader of Oak Glen Apple Growers Association offers these "Facts about organizing and managing a group association":

- You must be "thick skinned." Members do not always like the ideas you develop and are usually unwilling to offer productive alternatives.
- There will rarely be more than 15% of members who are active in promotions. Members will make it to 3 out of 10 meetings. Up to 60 % will participate in events.
- Group promotions will benefit you more than individual promotions will. The same effort put into a community-wide event will provide more than twice the amount of return than personal events or promotions.
- Work overtime to be impartial and fair.
- Recognize the contributions and experience of "old-timers."
- Develop close working relationships with those who have passion.

Primary Activities of the Organizations

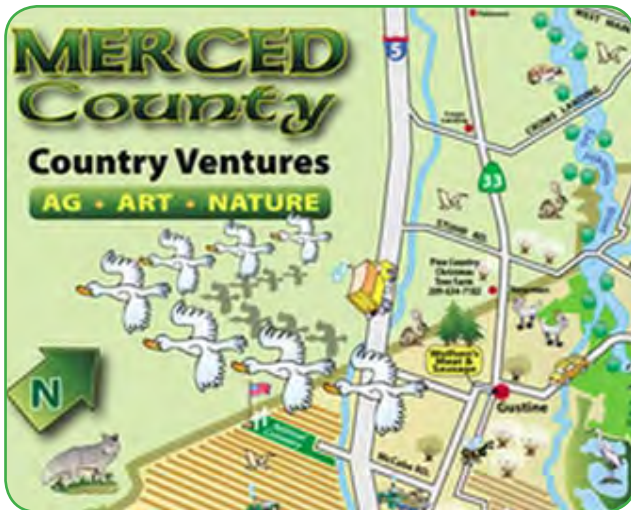
The key activities of the organizations varied, but can be grouped into some major categories:

- Creation of a logo and brand to identify local producers/members
- Printing and distributing a map or guide listing local farms, ranches and related businesses
- Website, apps, social media, county and state fair exhibits, road signs and other outreach promoting local farms, ranches and related businesses
- Collaborative farm trail/wine trail/open farm day/passport weekend events
- Operating farmers' markets and other direct marketing venues
- Fundraising events, dinners, festivals
- Education, skill-sharing and networking for members
- Scholarship programs, education, food access programs, and other community support efforts
- Aggregation and sales of local farm or ranch products (food hub, farm-to-school, online sales)
- Advocacy with county for regulatory changes favorable to agritourism and direct marketing and on other issues of importance to local farmers

A challenge that was mentioned by several group leaders is the importance of keeping activities consistent with the organizations' goals and not overcommitting.

Watch out for those “wonderful opportunities” that come up, but will take lots of time and distract you from your focus, or that the group may not be ready for.

Advice for two common collaborative agricultural marketing activities:



1. Creating a Map and Guide for a region

As one of their primary activities, most of the groups interviewed create, print and distribute a physical map and/or guide to members or local farms, ranches and other agricultural businesses. Although some groups are reconsidering the effectiveness of a printed map and guide, most continue to use this approach in their marketing efforts. Following are some notes from experienced groups and advice for creating a map and guide to promote regional agriculture and agritourism.

Putting Your Group ON THE MAP

Creating a regional agritourism marketing map

by Vivien Straus, Sonoma Marin Cheese Trail

The starting process

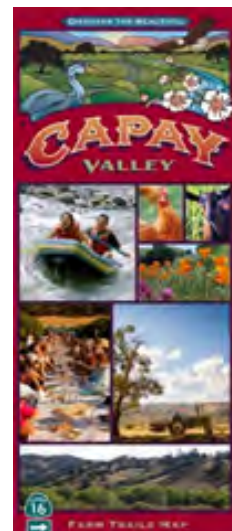
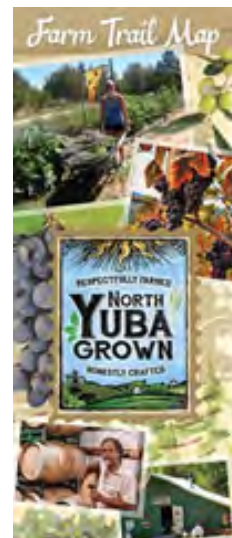
- Get together; send invitations to all.
 - Include farmers, producers, tourism professionals, agricultural organizations, local food advocates and other community partners.
 - Have good food and drink to share.
- Appoint a moderator to follow the agenda and keep the discussion moving.
 - Get input from everyone; write it down.
 - Take everyone's thoughts (go around room). No censoring allowed.

Questions for the group

- Who should be on the map?
- Who is the target audience?
- What do you want/not want on the map?
- What format? How big? Folded how? Basic layout ideas?
- How should farms be identified?
 - By crop, region, activities offered, hours open, sales locations?
 - Do you want map to show specific locations, approximate locations, or a combination?
- Text or story – What do you want to say?
 - What's great about your region?
- Who will write and edit the text?
- How will map be funded?
 - Advertising? Sponsors? Nonprofit funds?
- Who will design? Who will print?
 - Get suggestions from the group for graphic designers and printers.
- How will the map be stored and distributed?

Next Steps

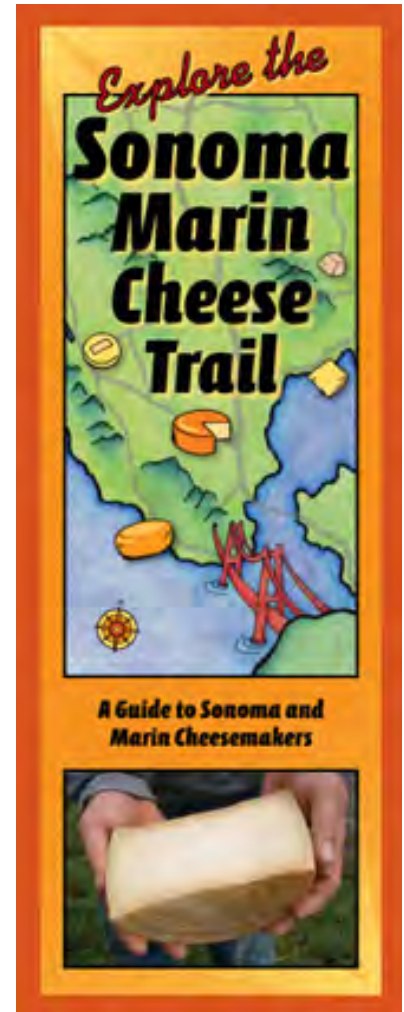
- Create a committee that will make decisions and keep the rest of the group in the loop.
- Identify designers and send out an RFP (Request for Proposal) with a deadline and contact person for the return of their proposals.



- Find a map whose paper and size you like. Get bids from printers for this style.
- Agree on a copywriter and editor.
- Set funding needs and levels.
- Identify and contact potential funders (sponsors, members, community partners).

Budget for Initial Sonoma Marin Cheese Trail Map

Printing (50,000 maps)	\$6,785.00
Graphic Designer	\$2,500.00
Graphic Designer – edits, other versions	\$275.00
Copywriter	\$750.00
Total Budget – 1st Run	\$10,310.00



Some updates and results for Sonoma Marin Cheese Trail

- Sales increased 25 percent in first few months at Marin French.
- Website, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram all helped build the buzz.
- A press contact person got stories in the NY Times and LA Times.
- 4000 monthly website views.
- 3000 app downloads.
- 50 daily app openings.
- 260,000 maps printed to date.
- \$60,000 raised to finance the project (in 4 years).
- Map placement: B&Bs, wineries, farmers’ markets, visitor centers, Chambers of Commerce.
- A contest generated more interest

Advice:

Stay in touch with those on the map and those who have supported the project

Contact: Vivien Straus

vivienstraus@gmail.com
213-304-7371

More map and brochure information and advice

Quantities Printed:

- **Country Crossroads map:** The three-county organization prints 35,000 copies of the map each year and runs out every year. Farm Bureau staff hope that increased use of the interactive web site will allow them to reduce the number of printed maps.
- **Nevada County Farm Guide:** 27,000 copies printed, 15,000 distributed as an insert in the local paper and the rest distributed by local businesses.
- **Colusa County Grown:** Full color Local Food Guide, 7000 copies printed, not all distributed.
- **Stanislaus County Grown:** First Local Food Guide published in July 2014, 10,000 copies printed.



Apple Hill Growers' Association's annual Cider Press brochure

- Now published in rack size rather than full-page size as it had been for many years.
- 150,000 copies of Cider Press printed and distributed annually.
- Every farm/member is listed in the same size type, in an attempt to promote all the farms, not just the larger ones who bought bigger ads in the past.
- Members are given the option to buy additional ads in the brochure.
- Cider Press makes money by selling sponsorships and ads.
- All advertisers must be visitor-serving businesses.
- No realtors and no direct competitors to Association members.
- Big partners now include Whole Foods, Waste Connections and SMUD.

More advice about maps, guides and brochures:

- Give them to realtors to distribute to their clients in a "Welcome to the neighborhood" packet.
- Always have them available, in your car, in your office, on your farm, etc.
- Get them to related non-profit organizations to share.
- Every farm and business listed on the map brochure should have a good supply to hand out.
- List the map/association/region/events on Visit California (www.visitcalifornia.com).
- Get the maps to schools and teachers.
- Talk to journalists to promote maps.
- Post downloadable maps on Facebook and your website.
- Give maps to politicians.
- Don't date the guide in case you want to use it for multiple years. (But don't order more than you can distribute before it becomes obsolete.)

2. Collaborative Events: Farm Tour/Open Farm Day/Passport Weekend

Many organizations organize once or twice a year collaborative events that allow visitors to tour, taste or participate in activities at multiple sites in the region, usually as a self-guided tour. These events are most often intended to promote and make money for the participating farms, ranches and vendors, but are sometimes intended primarily for community education and/or fundraising for the association.

Some examples, experiences, challenges and advice:

North Sierra Wine Trail holds an annual Wine Trail event for its 15 or so winery members in Yuba and Butte Counties to encourage visitors to venture to the Northern part of the Sierra Foothills appellation. Tickets for this event cost \$20, and the group sells about 500 tickets each year. The event is successful in bringing business to member wineries.

The organizer says that she sees Marysville people bringing their friends from the Bay Area, and that public awareness of wineries in the region is growing. Member wineries are not charged an additional fee to participate in this event. The group finds that a major challenge is urban visitors' lack of familiarity and comfort with rural roads.

About 400 people attend the **Farms of Tuolumne County** annual Farm and Ranch Tour, the organization's primary fund-raising event and a way to give back to the community. Tickets for the event are \$8 or \$10. Organizers have had a lot of good feedback, and have heard that it helps the businesses that participate. The tour is set up with five stops, on a route that can be driven in about 20 minutes. Each year, different farms, ranches and wineries are featured. Other members can participate by setting up booths with demonstrations, tastings, and sales at the tour spots. Only members are allowed to participate in this way and people are joining because they want to be on the farm tour.

The Farms of Tuolumne County leader offers this advice for Farm Tour events:

- Keep the number of stops small – five seemed reasonable.
- Keep it on a route that's drivable in 20 minutes or so.
- Use different farms and ranches each time.
- Let other members participate at the selected sites.
- 17 and younger get in free.
- Work with the health department – everyone doing tastings has to be certified.
- Organization should get a license for any wine tasting
- Get wine hosting insurance.

The **Mariposa AgriNature Association** has experimented with different formats for collaborative community events. The group offered farm trail events every spring and fall for four years. These were two-day events with up to 13 locations and multiple vendors and activities at all sites. Vendors, artists, farms and ranches were charged \$50; non-profits were not charged to be on the trail. Customers paid \$10 per person or \$25 per family to attend. Over the four years, the number of attendees went down from 500 to about 300. In 2011 the organization tried a Tomato Festival in a downtown park, with no admission charge. The first year approximately 1000 attended, but attendance dropped significantly the next year to 300, perhaps due to the extreme heat wave. With no admission fee charged at either of the Tomato Festival events and the farm trail events attracting as many people as the more poorly attended Tomato Festival, an admission fee did not seem to be the barrier to higher attendance.

Marketing California Farms and Wineries: A Guide for Groups

In 2015 they initiated a one day farm and ranch tour with five locations. Producers, organizers and attendees all responded favorably to the new format. A major challenge has been getting out the word about the event to the Mariposa and San Joaquin Valley people they would like to attract. They are trying to piggyback more on the producers' Facebook pages and use word-of-mouth to its full potential. They are also working closely with the Yosemite-Mariposa Tourism Bureau, Mariposa Chamber of Commerce and partnering with Yosemite National Park's promotional website. In addition to brochures, banners and newspaper articles they are suggesting to realtors that they buy tickets to give to clients, and putting postcards in local motels.

The **Lake County Winery Association** holds an annual passport weekend called "Wine Adventure" for the dual purposes of fund-raising for the association and putting on an event to showcase the region and sell wines. In 2015, 26 wineries participated, and by moving the date from the last weekend in July to the third weekend in May, the weather was much more temperate and enjoyable.

The Lake County association also holds professional wine judging competitions for wine with Lake Co. appellations on the label. Directed by an experienced and well-known member of the wine industry, this annual event is an exciting way to look at the evolving styles of wine made with Lake County grapes. The organization also holds a "People's Choice" wine tasting event that all member wineries are invited to join, with food for purchase and a concert (\$40 ticket). They are allowed to pour two wines each, which creates a challenge: How to provide lots of fun and lots of wine, and still be responsible. The association is working on a solution which might include adding new educational seminars and a DJ for dancing.

Sonoma County Farm Trails produces two annual self-guided tours they call "Blossoms, Bees & Barnyard Babies" in the spring and "Weekend Along the Farm Trails" in the fall. At the last spring tour, about 2000 visitors spent time at 44 participating farms and other businesses. Some farms saw more than 500 visitors, and several farm stands had record sales days.



Although the event was free and open to all, visitors were asked to register on-line, and then were emailed a program and link to the online interactive map. Farm Trails promoted the event primarily through social media: Boosted Facebook posts generated 200 registrations the following day! A few days before the event, Sonoma County Farm Trails E.D. Carmen Snyder closed registration at 2000 people to make sure that none of the farms were overwhelmed with too many visitors. However, she said she won't do this again as it disappointed many late registrants, while many who signed up very early did not show up. (No farms were overwhelmed.)

Snyder credits the highest-ever participation by farms to managing the event in a way that made it easier for them. Participating farms could choose to be open either or both days, and more than half took the option of only being open one day of the weekend event.

Blossoms, Bees & Barnyard Babies is operated as a benefit for Sonoma County Farm Trails' members, rather than as a fund-raiser for the organization. The association was able to put on the event after

a break of four years because it is now on a sound financial footing after an identity crisis several years ago. Finances have improved, says Snyder, because Farm Trails is putting more emphasis on the benefits of being a member, receives critical support from the county in the form of a share of Transient Occupancy Tax receipts, has increased community buy-in and sponsorships, and has tightened up operations on the organization's major fundraising event, the Gravenstein Apple Fair.

Sonoma County Farm Trails offers these suggestions for Open Farm Day events:

- Have enticing and well-plotted routes and clusters of operations. If neighbors are involved, you are more likely to get a larger number of visitors. Visitors enjoy learning about the terrain and culture of a small region, and not having to drive too far between destinations.
- Request that each farm add something special for visitors that is not offered on other days, such as a tour, tasting, live music or a demonstration.
- Make it as easy as possible for farmer/participants. Sonoma County Farm Trails kept the hours standard and manageable (10 to 4), recruited volunteers to help where needed, and educated visitors about farm visit etiquette.

Sierra Oro Farm Trail puts on an annual self-guided Passport Weekend event that usually sells out its 2000 tickets and includes 30 participating wineries and specialty farms located throughout Butte County. The ticket costs \$25 in advance or \$30 on the day of the event (if any are still available), and includes free tasting at each venue and a commemorative wine glass. Passport sales start Labor Day for the October event. The six-week sales cycle is supported by TV, radio, social media, email marketing and word of mouth. Locals are strongly encouraged to invite their friends for Passport Weekend and Chico State promotes the event as part of Alumni-Parent Weekend. Local Chambers of Commerce take calls and sell tickets.

Organizer Nicole Johansson tracks results of the event through the Eventbrite ticket sales platform, which allows her to identify where people are coming from by zip code, and she sees that people from out of the area are purchasing. The event used to sell 80% of tickets at local retail locations, but now sells 80% online. She sends a Constant Contact email survey to attendees a week post-event to measure satisfaction. The main issue used to be people getting lost, but now with smart phones so popular, there are almost no complaints.

To be included on Sierra Oro Farm Trail, farms must have:

- A location within Butte County.
- Hours of operation – they discourage “appointment only.”
- A location that is certified by the health department.
- Wineries must have a liquor license.
- Ample parking.

Some Sierra Oro Farm Trail costs and promotional activities:

- \$50,000 or more yearly revenue from the sale of passports, promotional items and advertising agreements.
- Approximately \$7,000 - \$10,000 map and passport printing.
- Approximately \$8,000 spent on advertising (mostly social and online, the local TV station is a sponsor).
- Radio and print promotions in exchange for ticket give aways.
- 6-bottle gift pack bags with logo.

Note: See appendix 2 for a summary of funding sources, membership fees and activities of all groups included in this study.

Marketing – What methods are most effective?

Since the goal of all the organizations interviewed for this study is promotion of local agriculture, whether to local consumers or to visitors from outside the region, we asked group leaders about what marketing methods they used and to rate the effectiveness of each on a five-point scale from “not at all effective” to “very effective.” Here is a summary of the responses:

- **Printed brochures, fliers, posters, maps and guides** – All of the groups printed and distributed at least one promotional piece, most often a map and guide featuring the members or the community being promoted. The vast majority of the group leaders rated these as a very effective marketing strategy. Several noted that the brochures and other printed materials are used primarily to drive visits to the website. Several others noted that the maps and guides are most useful once the visitors have arrived in the community, to help them get around. One organization leader said, “They also keep the members happy. Members see the biggest benefit to the print brochure, but young visitors use the on-line map to get around.”
- **Websites** – All of the groups have websites. The websites were rated as having a range of effectiveness by the group leaders, with about a third neutral about the effectiveness of their website, about a third calling them effective, and slightly more than a third rating the website as very effective. Maintaining and updating effective websites is an ongoing challenge that demands staff, volunteer or contracted time. Several talked about challenges related to websites. Here are some comments:
 - Be sure you have control of your website domain, domain name (from a group who let the domain registration expire due to a change of volunteer webmasters)
 - Getting the interactive web site up and running was challenging and took several years. The company that prints the maps was able to do the interactive version.
 - At first the board didn’t see the benefit of the website version. They were reluctant, but the organization was able to be thrifty, save up and invest in the web site.
 - Trying to get members/advertisers to update their information and links on the new map/website is a challenge. Most don’t know how to do this.
 - A more effective way for growers to update the website is needed, then the guide could pull information from the website.
- **Feature stories, on TV, radio, in newspapers or magazines** – Most of the groups consider feature stories to be very effective marketing for their events and their members, with only one saying that they did not use this marketing strategy. At least one of the groups writes their own stories for the local newspaper – featuring personal stories about each of the host producers on the tour.
- **Social media** – Most of the groups use Facebook for marketing. Although those who use it rated it as effective, only three rated this as a very effective strategy. Several mentioned boosted posts and paid Facebook ads as very effective, although one rated boosted posts as not at all effective.



- **Highway signage directing visitors to the businesses** – Most of the groups do not have highway signs directing visitors to their members, but two thirds of those that do rated them as very effective. At least one group is currently working with their county Board of Supervisors to get highway signs directing visitors to local wineries. In general, winery associations were more likely to have highway signs than other agritourism associations.
- **Chamber of Commerce, Visitor Bureau referrals** – Most groups felt that local Visitors Bureaus' referrals were effective or very effective, but several people mentioned that the local Chamber of Commerce was not at all helpful in providing referrals.
- **Direct mailings or emails to customers** – Several groups do not contact their customers directly by mail or email, but those that do rated this as an effective or very effective marketing method
- **Paid advertising in print, online or radio** – Paid advertising effectiveness depends on the media. More than half the groups interviewed pay for some print advertising, with the effectiveness rating of this marketing channel spread evenly from “not very effective” to “effective”, with none rating paid print advertising as “very effective.” However, one group leader explained, “Paid advertising is not very effective in itself, but it builds the connection to the local press, and encourages the important feature stories.” Several mentioned paid online advertising as very effective, and while radio promotion may work well in some communities, several mentioned radio advertising as not at all effective.
- **Word of mouth, recommendations from previous customers** – all of the people interviewed rated this as either an effective or a very effective form of marketing.

Beyond marketing – Other activities

1. Advocacy and political support

Many of the group leaders interviewed include advocacy with county government for policies favorable to their members as an important and valuable part of the organization's work. Here are a few comments about advocacy:

- The **Sonoma County Farm Trails** E.D. can advocate on behalf of farmers so that individual farmers won't have to stick their necks out about issues of reduced fees, easier permitting, small-scale poultry processing, etc.
- The **PlacerGROWN** CEO provides advocacy, connections, advice and referrals as needed. She represents the group at many meetings, and offers help to related groups.
- **North Yuba Grown** is proud to have made an impact on the local planning department in recent ordinance revisions by having one of their members attend meetings and speak on issues.
- The **Mariposa AgriNature Association** has been involved in the county planning process for many years, and continues to advocate on behalf of its members and other farmers. The county knows the group and invites its participation.
- **Farms of Tuolumne County**: The association is apolitical, but did provide input on the new



agriculture element in the general plan.

- **El Dorado County Farm Trails:** Without the creation of the Ag Commission, the County Chamber Ag Council and EDC Farm Trails, we would have lost our agricultural water to homes, with agricultural water rates rising to a level we could not afford. We have a grape grower on the Board of Supervisors and two agricultural members on the Planning Commission. Our latest challenges have been signage for agritourism, allowing farm stay and related non-production income to ranchers, as well as forestry, septic and wells, and ground water contamination.
- **Suisun Valley Vintners and Growers:** A major challenge was stopping the advancement of urbanization
 - The group fought through the general plan update and created the agricultural tourism zoning plan that allows tourism activities on up to 70 acres in the region and encourages restaurants and B&Bs
 - Encouraging boutique growers who are more likely to open wineries meant that minimum acreage needed to be reduced from 40 to 20 acres, so the group advocated for this zoning change.
- **Lake County Winery Association:** The group does some advocacy, although the board wants to stay away from controversy. The group did support changes in the visitor center – moving from staffed location to less expensive automated kiosk – as a good use of tourism promotion funds
- Members of **Capay Valley Grown** met regularly for months to come to consensus on changes the group wanted made in newly proposed agricultural zoning ordinances. The organization president wrote several letters on behalf of the group, and he and other members spoke at hearings, resulting in recognition of the group by the county planners and supervisors, and some changes in the new rules more favorable to agritourism and small-scale farming.



2. **Aggregation and sales of local farm or ranch products**

Several of the groups included in this study are engaged in or are planning aggregation and sales activities for local producers. Here is a brief summary of groups engaged in or planning these ventures:

- To meet their goal of connecting small-scale producers with appropriate markets, **Solano Grown** established an online marketplace for growers, to sell locally produced agricultural products to Fairfield residents. Customers of the marketplace place their orders online between Friday morning and Tuesday night, and pick up their orders at the Horticulture Building at Solano Community College on Thursdays between 3:00 and 5:30 p.m. So far, total sales have ranged between about \$25 and \$125 per week through this program, but the organizer hopes more

marketing and a change in the pick-up day will increase sales.

- **Marin Organic** was previously very involved in a farm to school program with USDA funding, trucking produce from farmers to local school districts through their “sow a row” program. This program was discontinued, although some individual farmers benefited. In general, the school districts served were too small, the orders were too small, and many of the farmers were not willing to sell at a price that the schools could afford to pay. Farmers in general did not need this market, according to the Marin Organic director.
- **Nevada County Grown** is hoping to receive grant funding for the development of an aggregation site to connect farmers with local restaurants.
- **Colusa County Grown** is currently developing an action plan for an Ag Education Center that will include a store to sell local products, a commercial kitchen, and an agritourism starting place.
- **North Yuba Grown** is in conversation with a county supervisor who is interested in starting a food hub in Marysville to aggregate distribution from local farms to local restaurants

3. Education and networking for members

Many of the groups put on quarterly potlucks or annual dinners for members, and consider this one of the benefits of membership. Some groups organize educational events or activities for members. The **North Sierra Wine Trail** brings wine critics to membership meetings to give feedback to members. **Colusa County Grown** will organize and hold a Colusa County agritourism workshop in February 2016, and will organize and offer a “model tour” for producers, media and government in summer or fall 2016. **Suisun Valley Vintners and Growers Association** keeps its members informed about pests and quarantine regulations.

4. Community education, scholarships, community support and food access activities



As 501c3 non-profit organizations, many groups operate scholarship programs in their communities. A few examples: The **Suisun Valley Vintners and Growers** is paying back the community by offering a full two-year community college scholarship each year through the Solano Community College Scholarship Foundation. From the beginning, **Sonoma County Farm Trails** has had a scholarship fund for FFA students and community college students studying agriculture. **Farms of Tuolumne County** offers a small scholarship to high school students entering agricultural careers but has not received many applications, so they are looking at using the money to help develop high school ag programs directly.

Some of the groups are involved with others in their communities in food access activities as well as nutrition education and agricultural education projects. **PlacerGROWN** is trying to start operating an Educational Food Truck to travel to schools and community events and is setting up EBT access for CalFresh users at the farmers' markets. **Marin Organic** organizes field trips to bring kids out to farms, with a goal of 2000 kids participating in farm visits each year. **Colusa County Grown** is working with local community groups to provide nutrition education.

5. Mentoring and skill transfer

Marin Organic operates a program they call "Farming 101." This is a skill-transfer program, working with aging farmers to transfer their skills to and mentor young farmers. For this project, Marin Organic works with California FarmLink to help locate and qualify young beginning farmers, and works with Kitchen Table Advisors to assist with business planning for these young farmers. Marin Organic also works with UC Cooperative Extension and California FarmLink for land access for young farmers.

Note: See appendix 2 for a summary of funding sources, membership fees and activities of all groups included in this study.



Greatest achievements of the groups to date

Group leaders were asked what they considered their groups' greatest achievements. The responses varied, but are summarized here:

- **Logo or brand** – Many groups are proud to have created a unifying brand for their regions.
- **Map and Farm Guide in print or on the website** – Most groups consider their local map and guide a considerable achievement, and are proud that it is well known in their communities and used by many to connect with local farms and other group members.
- **Regular events** – Several groups mentioned the creation of successful community events as their greatest achievement.
- **Promoting off-season entertainment and events.**
- **Increased public awareness** of the region's farms and/or wineries.
- **Being a pioneer** and part of the early work that was done to celebrate and foster the local food movement.
- **Increased membership participation.**
- **Increased value to members.**
- **Community agricultural leadership and recognition** - Several group leaders were most proud of their group's work in unifying the community, providing agricultural leadership, building coalitions and becoming respected and recognized by the board of supervisors and other county leaders. Many are proud of their influence on county regulations or the county's increased support of agriculture and agricultural education.
- **Longevity, organizational sustainability and simply still being here!**



Some final challenges and advice

Success often brings its own challenges

- The **Oak Glen Apple Growers'** biggest challenge is managing traffic flow due to success: parking and traffic jams can get difficult at peak season. In response, one larger ranch may add more parking and the group may try to arrange a bus and a park-and-ride lot, but hasn't done so yet. Another aspect of the region's success is that wedding venues have increased, generating more noise and parking issues, which alienate neighbors and other association members. The group is trying to work it out in-house, come up with some solutions, and then propose those to the county.
- **Suisun Valley Vintners and Growers** are also facing new issues as a result of their success. They anticipate some control challenges as larger growers join the board.
- **Sonoma County Farm Trails** is investigating licensing its "Farm Trails" trademark to other regions. As other California regional agricultural marketing associations learn from and emulate the successful pioneers of the local food movement, many do not recognize that Sonoma County Farm Trails holds a trademark to the phrase "Farm Trails."

Some final advice from experienced regional agricultural marketing group leaders:

- **Understand and engage with the tourism program in your community.**
 - You need to understand the public tourism program structure – Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), Business Improvement District (BID) and how it works and how the money flows. The Suisun Valley Vintners & Growers Association works closely with the Fairfield Conference and Visitors Bureau and their BID program (3% add-on to room fees) to promote regional tourism. Suisun Valley is a primary attraction and receiver of visitation. The visitation to Suisun Valley in turn fills hotel rooms in Fairfield.
 - If you don't engage yourself with the tourism promotion entity in your community and are not present within that tourism promotion, you will not be seen to exist.
- **Partnerships and community support are key!**
 - It's important to form alliances in the community. Find the niche and the need, rather than duplicating.
 - It's good that the county recognizes the value of your organization.
 - Try to get a good Board of Supervisors.
 - Partnerships are key! Even the most unlikely partnerships can yield benefits.

The future – goals and visions

In most cases, current goals of the groups remain similar to the starting goals. Most groups with a goal of increasing revenue and adding value for their members will continue to promote their members' businesses. Those with a mission of developing more agritourism in their communities have goals of adding specific businesses to the mix, such as more boutique wineries, more B&Bs, farm stays, farm stands, or restaurants. Those with a goal of increasing connections in their own communities between farmers and others hope to continue this work, sometimes with innovative activities. The majority of groups intend to continue developing and improving the activities they currently offer. Many have a goal of increasing membership in their organizations and adding or increasing staff. Several groups are starting strategic planning sessions, in order to refocus their goals and strategies. Some groups doing strategic planning mentioned evaluating whether to reduce their print publications and expand online marketing. Several groups are planning to expand into new areas over the next five years, or are anticipating new challenges. Here are some examples:

Increased education and community involvement

- **Colusa County Grown**, working with local stakeholders and a member of the County Board of Supervisors, is planning to develop an Agricultural Education Center. The proposed Center will sell local produce, offer agricultural education and day-long seminars, be the starting place for tours of local agriculture, and offer chef demonstrations. The Center will focus on agriculture, but will also showcase other artisanal products produced in Colusa County.
- **Marin Organic** would like to dig deeper with their Farm Field Studies Program, expanding it to include cooking and food processing. They are also looking into expanding their farmer-mentoring program, Farming 101, into other counties. Within five years, they hope to have a world-class mentoring and farmer-training program, with an incubator farm similar to Stone Barns or Center for Land Based Learning.
- **PlacerGROWN** is fundraising to operate an Educational Food Truck. The Food Truck will be a mobile food facility that will travel to schools and community events to offer food preparation, samples of local food and educational programs to the community.
- **Sonoma County Farm Trails** is planning a scholarship fundraising event to amplify the organization's scholarship program, and also plans to work more with the FFA program (high school agricultural education). The SCFT E.D. would also like to record the stories of some of the Farm Trail elders.

Increased involvement in developing local food systems

- **Nevada County Grown** is planning to develop a Food Hub for the region, to aggregate and sell local produce. NCG is also working to encourage more landowners in the community to grow crops on their land and to participate in the new Food Hub. In addition, NCG has a goal to get restaurants to use locally grown food, and then promote those restaurants by adding a restaurant section to the next food guide.
- **Stanislaus Grown** envisions that in five years they will be fully integrated in all marketing channels, including sales to local institutions including schools, colleges and hospitals.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following individuals for generously contributing their experiences and advice to this project, either through interviews or through participation and presentations at earlier Small Farm Program agritourism workshops:

Devon Riley, Oak Glen Apple Growers Association

Robin Delfino, Apple Hill Growers Association

Amber McDowell, Sacramento River Delta Grown Agritourism Association

Pamela Marvel and Paul Muller, Capay Valley Grown

Gary Hawthorne, North Yuba Grown

Vivien Straus, Sonoma Marin Cheese Trail

Nicole and Jamie Johansson, Sierra Oro Farm Trail

Alan Haight, John Powers and Joan Clapper, Nevada County Grown

Alyse Hickman, North Sierra Wine Trail

Carmen Snyder, Sonoma County Farm Trails

Carol Arnold, PlacerGROWN

Jean Okuye, Merced Country Ventures

Jeffery Westman, Marin Organic

Jess Brown, Country Crossroads Map

John Snyder, Riverside County Ag Trail

Ken Hagan, Harvest Time in Brentwood

Kris Casto, Mariposa AgriNature Association

Marian Zimmerly, Farms of Tuolumne County

Patti Turner, Colusa County Grown

Roger King, Suisun Valley Vintners and Growers Association

Simone Hardy and Ken Williams, Solano Grown

Susan Bragstad, Farms of Amador County

Terry Dereniuk, Lake County Winery Association

Trina Walley, Stanislaus Grown

Wendell Smith, El Dorado County Farm Trails

Resources - links

This section offers links to documents and resources provided by the groups participating in this study, including organizational by-laws, membership applications, educational resources, and presentations. All of these resources are also available through online links at:

http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/events/building_a_farm_trail_project_2013_-_2015/

[Farms of Tuolumne County Start-up Story](#), by Marian Zimmerly

[FOTC Membership Agreement](#)

[Suisun Valley Vintners & Growers Association trade website](#)

[SVVGA membership info](#)

[Marin Organic membership page](#)

[Colusa County Grown Program Evaluation Data](#)

[Harvest Time in Brentwood mission statement, benefits and marketing partners](#)

[Harvest Time in Brentwood membership application](#)

[Harvest Time in Brentwood Sponsorship opportunities](#)

[Sonoma County Farm Trails membership info](#)

[Capay Valley Grown membership info](#)

[Capay Valley Grown supporter info](#)

Other resources and references:

- [“Building a Farm Trail” project information](#)
- [Regional Agricultural Marketing; A Review of Programs in California](#), Derden-Little & Feenstra, 2006
- Presentation: [Community Agritourism Associations](#), by Devon Riley, Oak Glen Apple Growers
- Presentation: [Temecula Valley Winegrowers Association](#), by Peggy Evans
- Presentation, [Sierra Oro Farm Trail](#), by Jamie Johansson & Nicole Johansson

Appendix 1 - Group beginnings:

A brief history of needs and opportunities

§ Apples, cider and apple pies

Oak Glen Apple Growers Association started in 1914 as a wholesale apple growers' association united to move bulk apples to market by rail. By the 1950s, these growers were edged out of the wholesale market by competition from Washington State. At about the same time, the road from Los Angeles to Oak Glen, an hour or two away by car, was paved. Oak Glen apple growers shifted their focus and started entering regional fairs with big displays directed at attracting tourists from L.A. to Oak Glen for retail sales of apples, apple pies, cider, meals at local restaurants, and a picnic in the country.



In the early 1960s, pear growers in the Sierra foothills were hit by a pear blight that destroyed their crops. Needing to act fast to protect their livelihoods, a local grower who also grew apples, along with a UC Cooperative Extension advisor and the county agricultural commissioner, visited the thriving agritourism community of Oak Glen to learn about successful retail apple marketing. In 1964, 16 ranchers formed the **Apple Hill Growers Association**, held their first press picnic that August, and handed out 50,000 paper bags at the state fair, offering two pounds of free apples to visitors who brought the bags to Apple Hill. They soon added pies and cider to the offerings, attracting regular fall crowds from the Sacramento region, about an hour away.



§ Farm stands

In the 1970s (before farmers' markets were everywhere) many small-scale growers in agricultural regions close to population centers began direct-marketing their crops through roadside stands on the farms. In 1973, Sonoma County farmers formed **Sonoma County Farm Trails** as a 501(c)6 non-profit organization, created their first Map and Guide to promote the farm stands, and revived the dormant Sebastopol Apple Show as the first Gravenstein Apple Fair to pull in visitors to the region.



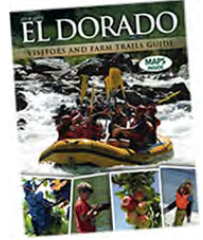
In 1976, farmers in the Brentwood region of Contra Costa County pooled their advertising budgets to create **Harvest Time in Brentwood** to promote their farm stands and U-Pick operations to the local community and later the Bay Area. In the same year, an increase in the number of farms direct marketing through roadside stands led the Santa Clara County Farm Bureau and local growers to create the first **Country Crossroads Map**, modelled on the Sonoma county Farm Trails Map, which provided a standardized way to show consumers where to go to buy local food.



§ **Farmers' markets & county support**

By the 1990s, farmers' markets were becoming popular as direct marketing venues for farmers as well as for their cultural and economic benefits for communities. Boards of Supervisors in several foothill counties supported growers in developing farmers' markets and regional marketing organizations.

El Dorado County Farm Trails started in 1992, with approximately \$20,000 from the county and \$100 each from 50 farmers, to create and operate farmers' markets and to develop agricultural trails to promote on-farm direct marketing. **Farms of Amador County** started in 1994 with an \$800 loan from a county supervisor to operate local farmers' markets. With \$100,000 from the county Board of Supervisors, **PlacerGROWN** was started in 1995 as a mutual support group of local growers seeking to increase sales and a county-based agricultural marketing program to market local growers and their products to local consumers.

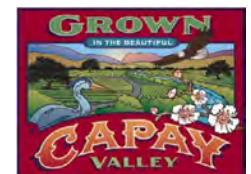


§ **Local food for local people & regional agritourism**

In the early 2000s, two different themes emerged in regional agricultural marketing associations. Rural community members (not necessarily farmers) and local governments saw the need to protect and support agriculture in their communities as part of maintaining a rural ambiance and enhancing community connections. At the same time, an increasing number of growers were growing organically or producing wine, olive oil, cheese and other value-added products in boutique facilities and recognizing the potential for a regional brand and agritourism activities to increase their revenue.

In 2000, Suisun Valley wine grape growers lost their primary market due to changes at Sebastiani Winery, and regional pear and tomato growers were still suffering from the closure of Tri Valley Growers processing facility. In the face of development pressure, the City of Fairfield wanted to keep Suisun Valley rural and rustic to help sustain property values. The City of Fairfield and other partners started the Suisun Valley Fund and spent \$200,000 a year for eight years on agricultural branding and agritourism development. This helped support the **Suisun Valley Vintners and Growers Association** in their goal to build awareness of the area as a wine region, and to market the agricultural region as a tourist destination. They also funded the **Suisun Valley Harvest Trails Association**, which is no longer active.

With staff support from UC Cooperative Extension and \$3000 from the county, **Farms of Tuolumne County** was formed in 2003, to promote local agriculture to local people and to build political support. Also in 2003, Capay Valley farmers united by pooling \$2500 of their own money with \$15,000 from the Community Alliance for Family Farmers (CAFF) to create and promote the **Capay Valley Grown** brand and to increase the marketability of Capay Valley products. In 2005, vintners and farmers in Butte County created the **Sierra Oro Farm Trail** to establish an agritourism program for the county.



In 2006, the **Mariposa AgriNature Association** was formed by several small-scale growers, with support from the County Supervisors, the Mariposa County Tourism Bureau and the Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation & Development Council. Goals were to highlight agriculture, increase agricultural activity on small acreage plots, support established producers, and to connect farmers and ranchers with community members. In 2008, a coalition of local people supportive of local agriculture created **Nevada County Grown** to protect the local food supply and to keep farmers in business so that the rural character of the county enjoyed by the community would be protected. They received \$10,000 in start-up support from the Nevada County Board of Supervisors. In 2008, the **Lake County Winery Association** formed to promote the Lake County wine region to consumers within a 300-mile radius, with start-up money of \$200 each from members and a contribution of \$10,000 from Lake County. In 2009, a small group of Merced County farmers and ranchers, with help from UC Cooperative Extension (but no outside funding), formed **Country Ventures** to support farmers in developing agritourism and educational programs.



§ **USDA funding, new wine & farm trails**

In the late 2000s and early 2010s, two major USDA programs funded through the Farm Bill—the Farmers’ Market Promotion Program (FMPP) and the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBG)—contributed to the start-up of local agricultural marketing programs in several counties. These competitive grant programs generally fund governmental, educational or non-profit entities working “on behalf of” and in support of agricultural producers. Meanwhile, producer-based, self-funded groups continued to organize themselves to develop farm and wine trails.

In 2009, the Solano County Dept. of Agriculture received \$52,000 from the FMPP to provide direct marketing assistance to Solano County growers. They revived the Suisun Valley Harvest Trails Association as **Solano Grown**, developed a logo, and began meeting with growers to identify needs. In 2012, Stanislaus County Resource Conservation District (RCD) received a grant from FMPP to develop **Stanislaus Grown** to support Stanislaus County growers and improve access to local foods. Also in 2012, the Colusa County RCD received an FMPP grant to develop **Colusa County Grown** to promote direct-to-consumer sales, and the Riverside County Department of Agriculture worked with other county departments to create the **Riverside County Ag Trail**, a website that promotes agritourism and agricultural producers who sell to the public.

In 2012, several groups of producers formed agritourism associations, funding themselves by member contributions and fundraising events. Fifteen Yuba and Butte County wineries formed the **North Sierra Wine Trail** to promote agritourism, encourage regional tourism development and maintain farming as a viable option for land buyers. A group of farmers, wineries and community members formed **North Yuba Grown** in 2012 to promote and support local food for local people, agritourism for wine and olive oil producers and local farms. A dozen or so Sacramento River Delta producers formed the **Sacramento River Delta Grown Agritourism Association** to promote agricultural sustainability and increase profitability of local farmers through agritourism and agri-education.

Appendix 2: Summary of Selected California Regional Agricultural Marketing Groups

Group name	Year started	Current funding sources	Number of producer and other members	Membership fee	Paid staff	Current activities
Oak Glen Apple Growers Association	1914	membership fees, plus additional advertising fees paid by members	10 producers of 32 member businesses	\$335 annual fee, plus extra for more advertising on website	no paid staff, website manager paid nominal fee	website, seasonal promotion, 2 major annual events, promotional booths at fairs and presentations to local service clubs
Apple Hill Growers Association	1964	membership fees, TOT receipts from county, advertising, sponsors/partners	55 member ranches	\$175 plus, depending on activities offered and number of acres farmed	1 part-time paid staff person	website, app, Cider Press Brochure, general promotion of member activities & events, email newsletter, Facebook, Annual Apple Hill run event
Sonoma County Farm Trails	1973	Apple Fair & other fundraising events, sponsors, TOT from county, membership fees	120 producers of 170 members	\$150 annual fee	1 full-time paid Executive Director, 1 half to full-time office manager	annual Apple Fair, other fundraising events, farm & ranch tours 2x year, map & guide, website, scholarships, etc.
Country Crossroads Map	1976	membership fees, affiliate and supporter fees, some staff time contributed by Farm Bureau	50 producers, also associate members	producers up to \$200, affiliates and supporters: \$75	Farm Bureau staff do work, reimbursed by member fees	annual print and interactive website map of farm stand and agritourism operations in 2 or 3 counties

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Group name	Year started	Current funding sources	Number of producer and other members	Membership fee	Paid staff	Current activities
Harvest Time in Brentwood	1976	membership fees, sponsors, festival beer & wine and vendor receipts, developer mitigation funds through city	47 producer members, plus affiliates/sponsors	\$300 for members, \$300 - \$10,000 for others involved	no paid staff, contracts for website, map design and festival coordination	producing map/guide, website, app, social media, annual Harvest Festival
Marin Organic	1992	membership fees, sponsorships, fund-raising events	42 producers, 100 businesses, 350 supporters	producers: \$100 - \$350 (depending on gross sales), businesses: \$350, supporters: \$100	2.5 paid staff	youth education, farmer mentoring, connecting farmers to chefs, new farmer training
El Dorado County Farm Trails	1992	membership dues, \$5000 from county for signs (2 years ago), Visitors' Bureau contributes to printing trail map and guide	125 - 150 members, all producers, and some associates	each member pays \$100 annually plus \$50 this year to finance new website	no paid staff, working board, contracted marketing	managing one farmers' market, Farm Trail Guide, website, apps, route signs on roads, advocacy, water testing organization
Farms of Amador County	1994	farmer' market membership and booth fees, annual Farm Tour & Dinner, fees from educational workshops	35 market vendors, 25 are from Amador County	farmers' market stall fees plus \$50 annual membership fee	all volunteer organization	managing farmers' markets, annual Farm Tour and dinner, educational workshops
PlacerGROWN	1995	farmers' market vendor fees	no longer membership organization, all county growers can use logo	farmers' market stall fees pay for organization	farmers' market program manager is CEO of organization	managing farmers' markets, and related activities (County Dept. of Ag controls website, does marketing using PlacerGROWN logo)

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Suisun Valley Vintners & Growers Assoc.	2000	funding remaining from Suisun Valley Fund from developers' mitigation, BID funds, membership fees	110 members, including 41 growers	\$200 - \$1000 for grower members (\$10/acre/yr.), \$200 for affiliates	no paid staff, board does work, websites and marketing are contracted	2 websites - 1 for industry & 1 for public, annual Harvest Celebration, scholarship program, promotion to wine industry and public
Farms of Tuolumne County	2003	membership fees, Farm Tour ticket sales, sponsorships	50 producer/members, 20 associates, 6 sponsors	\$50 members, \$200 sponsors	no paid staff, volunteer E.D.	printed Farm Guide, annual Farm & Ranch Tour, scholarship program, member dinner
Capay Valley Grown	2003	membership fees, sponsors	currently 42 producer members on map, Capay Valley Grown is a project of Capay Valley Vision, non-profit organization	\$100 annual fee	one contracted person to update website and Facebook (a few hours each month)	website, Facebook, promotion of member events, open farm day event, map guide brochure
Sierra Oro Farm Trail	2005	Passport tickets, advertising agreements, sale of promotional items, membership fees	30 participating wineries and farms	\$400 annual fee	no paid staff	annual Passport Weekend, website, social media
Mariposa AgriNature Association	2006	event fees, donations from visitors' bureau, phone company & others	currently no membership	no fees currently; producers, vendors & visitors charged for annual tour	no paid staff, volunteers & producers organize the tours	1-day annual farm and ranch tour, want to do more ag education & community outreach

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Nevada County Grown	2008	membership fees & donations, advertising in the Farm Guide, small grants from local sponsors, event tickets and event sponsors	72 producers, about 20 community supporters	\$40 or more for producers, \$35 - \$100 for supporters	1 part-time staff person, contracted Farm Guide production	Farm Guide, annual fundraising event, county fair booth, maybe Food Hub soon
Lake County Winery Assoc.	2008	Sponsors, membership fees, public events	54 members in 4 categories	Full winery - \$300 - \$2500, based on production, Winemaker: \$400, Vineyard: \$100, Associate (hospitality, financial industry, etc.): \$200 - \$500	1 staff person; the E.D. is an employee, but was contracted in the past.	annual Wine Adventure Event, Professional Wine Judging Competition, People's Choice wine tasting event
Country Ventures	2009	advertising fees from those promoted by map	26 advertisers, 15 on map, a few are growers	\$250 to be on map & website	no paid staff, contract with private marketing business for website map	printed map, website, advocacy
Solano Grown	2009	CDFA Specialty Crop Block Grant, membership fees, sponsors, percent of sales made through online marketplace	30 producer members, 11 producers on marketplace site	members \$30, sponsors \$60, public "locavores" sign up for free information	3 part-time staff paid through grant	logo, website, farm trail map, operating online marketplace consumer-directed aggregation program, annual fundraising & marketing event
North Sierra Wine Trail	2012	membership fees, Wine Trail ticket sales	14 producers of 15 member wineries	\$100 annually	staff time contributed by larger member	annual Wine Trail event, website, Facebook

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North Yuba Grown	2012	Membership fees	13 producers of 19 member businesses	\$40 annual fee	no paid staff, volunteer E.D.	website, advocacy, help sponsor annual harvest festival, local aggregation for farm-to-school
Riverside Co Ag Trail	2012	staff time by various county departments, as directed by county board of supervisors	no membership, 180 locations on map	no fees to be listed	one-time project, no maintenance	no plans to do anything currently, no-one responsible for updates of website
Colusa County Grown	2012	Grant from CDFA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program	no membership, no clarity about who gets to use logo	no fee	parent organization (Colusa county Resource Conservation District) staff does work, no committees	Local Food Guide, exhibit at county fair, website, Facebook, developing plan for Ag Education Center, organizing "how-to-tour" and agritourism workshop in 2016
Stanislaus Grown	2012	USDA Farmers' Market Promotion Program grant for marketing, website, outreach to consumers	no membership; Stanislaus Grown is a project of the East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District, 50 of 65 listings in Local Food Guide are farmers	listing costs \$75 for producers, \$200 for others such as restaurants	East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District is staff for the project	website, Local Food Guide, looking for funding for outreach and education for members
Sacramento River Delta Agritourism Association	2012	membership fees, Passport Weekend ticket sales, sponsorships	21 producer members, 9 affiliates	\$250 - \$350 for producers, depending on size, \$150 for associates	no paid staff, contracted graphic design work	annual Passport Weekend, website, printed map guide